

Romans 12:3-8 – “Body Parts Wanted” Participant’s Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To help us understand the necessity of belonging to and relating in community for running the Christian race well.

Sermon Refresher: In our highly individualized culture, it can be easy to approach our Christian life in the same way: as an individual, thinking we can make it pretty well on our own in the race. But the Bible says that we are not whole on our own, nor are we meant to run our race alone; we are a body part and very much in need of each other.

Icebreaker: Choose one:

- When was a time in your life when having a partner really helped you to do something that you probably couldn’t have done on your own (complete a project, train for an event, stay accountable for something)?
- What are some of your Christmas traditions?

Discussion:

1. Read Romans 12:3-5 out loud together.
2. How has belonging to a Christian community helped or encouraged you in the past?
3. In v. 5, Paul says that we are a body part. What are some things that are true of body parts?
4. In our highly individualized culture, it’s very easy to listen to wrong self-talk that makes us live like a spiritually amputated body part. Take turns reading out loud the following list of wrong self-talk. From the following list or from the sermon, what are the heart-level reasons that keep you from experiencing deeper community?
 - “I’m too busy; I can’t invest the time it requires.”
 - “I’m happy with the relationships I have; I’m not looking for new ones.”
 - “These people wouldn’t want to hang out with me.”
 - “I have boundaries; don’t push me.”

- “These people aren’t like me; there’s a limit to how deep we can go.”
 - “No one wants to know about my messy life.”
 - “Relationships overwhelm me; I don’t have the capacity right now.”
 - “If these people really knew me; I’m not sure they’d accept me.”
 - “I don’t want to inconvenience others by asking more of them.”¹
5. How should being a body part that belongs to all the others in the Body of Christ change the way we think about relationships in church/small group? How is our belonging to one another a deeper reality and different than friendship?
 6. What are some ways you’d like to see your small group grow toward deeper community? What is one way that you personally could help cultivate that deeper community?
 7. Read Romans 12:3 out loud. In this verse, Paul points out that pride is an insidious community-killer. A good definition of pride might be thinking of ourselves too often and/or too highly. What are some of the ways that pride can be a community-killer?
 8. In Romans 12:3, Paul also points out that it is by the “grace given to” us that we are able to fight pride and build deeper community. What do you need to remember about God’s grace to empower you in this way?

Digging Deeper (optional):

9. A spiritual gift is something that you are good at doing that builds up and blesses other people, especially the Body of Christ (the church). How do you enjoy serving or how might you enjoy serving?
10. How have you been built up or encouraged in your faith through someone in your small group?

Sharing and Prayer:

Because we belong to each other, we listen to each other and we carry each other’s burdens. Ask your group to share a burden that the group can carry together by caring for each other and praying for each other. Pray that your group would take steps toward deeper community.

¹ Most of these reasons are from *The Gospel-centered Community* by Robert H. Thune and Will Walker.

Romans 12:3-8 – “Body Parts Wanted” Exercise

This exercise can be a lot of fun and help develop a deeper sense of community in your group. Write the same number on two slips of paper until you have enough slips for every woman in your group to have one. There should be two slips with the number “1,” two slips with the number “2,” etc. Put those slips of paper, folded up, in a women’s bowl. Do the same thing for men in your group. Put all the slips folded up in two bowls, one bowl for men, one bowl for women, making sure that each bowl has matching sets of numbers (two 1’s, two 2’s, etc.). Have each woman draw a number out of the women’s bowl and each man draw a number out of the men’s bowl. Make sure to include people in your group who couldn’t come this week. This will match up people in pairs (men with men, women with women). If you have an odd number of men or women in your group, you as the leader may need to pair up with two people. Make sure everyone has a partner.

Tell them their exercise for this next week is to spend some time with the person they are matched up with. They can have coffee together, eat lunch together, exercise together, whatever. Tell them their goal is to get to know the other person better and make sure to ask them 2 simple questions during their time together:

1. What’s the race of your Christian life been like recently?
2. Is there anything I can do to help or pray for you in your race?